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AUTHOR	Snow, Mary B.
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ABSTRACT

The comprehensive review of Nevada's Competency Testing Program for Educational Personnel grew out of a study which followed a cohort of new teachers over 2 years to determine their test-taking experiences. Results suggested a need to investigate the program and its scope, implementation problems, and relation to other educational entities such as districts, universities, and teacher associations. The work described in this report occurred during the 1995-96 school year. The study included three parts. The first section: (1) examined total numbers of each Nevada endorsement issued on initial licenses within the last 3 years and endorsements for which there were corresponding validated competency tests; and (2) reviewed passing scores for nine specialty-area tests. The second section described discussions by ad hoc committees representing varied perspectives on two program problems (communication and study materials/diagnostic information). The third section discussed ways to work together to help districts with recruitment and hiring and the Department with licensing. Findings are presented. Four appendixes include: (1) plans for comprehensive review of the Nevada Competency Testing Program for Educational Personnel; (2) the Competency Testing Review Committee; (3) the Northern Ad Hoc and Southern Ad Hoc Committees; and (4) participants at the Meeting of District Personnel Officers and Department Staff. (SM)

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COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE NEVADA COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

Mary B. Snow, PhD

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COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE NEVADA COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

Mary B. Snow, PhD

Nevada Department of Education
700 East Fifth Street
Carson City, NV 89701

November 1996

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The idea of a comprehensive review of the Competency Testing Program grew out of a study which followed a cohort of new educational personnel over a two year period in order to determine what their test taking experiences had been (Snow, 1995). It was felt that there was a need to look deeper into the program, its scope, its implementation problems, and its relation to other educational entities such as the districts, the universities, and the teachers associations.

A plan for such a review was approved in the fall of 1995. The work described in this report took place during the 1995-96 school year. The study consisted of three major parts. The first, a Review of Tests and Passing Scores in the Current Program, includes two parts:

1) an examination of the total numbers of each Nevada endorsement issued on initial licenses within the last three years, in rank order, and those endorsements for which there are corresponding validated competency tests in place.

2) a review of the passing scores for nine NTE Specialty Areas tests which have been in the program for four or more years and for which Educational Testing Service has no plans to develop new tests in the near future.

The second section, Implementation of the Program, describes discussions by Ad Hoc Committees representing many varied perspectives of two of the major problems of the program, **Communication** and **Study Materials/Diagnostic Information.**

In the third section, Review Ways to Encourage Completion of Competency Testing Requirements Before the License is Issued, another group consisting of five district Personnel officers and four department staff, discusses ways to work together to help both the districts with their recruitment and hiring responsibilities and the Department with its licensing responsibilities.

Highlights of the Findings:

- 87% of new educational personnel coming into Nevada are covered by the current Competency Testing Program. There are continuing efforts to increase this percentage.

- Of the nine tests reviewed, higher passing scores were recommended by the Competency Testing Review Committee for the Educational Leadership, School Guidance and Counseling, Health Education, and Home Economics tests.

- The two biggest communication problems related to the Competency Testing Program are 1) Teachers have trouble determining exactly what tests they should take and 2) The Department has trouble getting information about changes in tests or test policy to the personnel who will be directly effected.

- Help with preparation for tests is available from a number of sources such as Educational Testing Service, the universities, and the teachers associations; however, what one agency or group provides is not always known to teachers or other agencies, as these meetings revealed.

- All participants, representing various educational organizations/associations, agreed that the most important outcome of the meetings was the realization that "we have to work together" if the implementation of the program is to improve.

- Due to the large number of new teachers hired in Nevada each year, and the competition in recruiting new teachers, district Personnel Officers felt it would not be realistic to expect new people to meet all requirements, including competency testing, before the license is issued.

- "The instituting of a 3 Year Temporary License with explicit information regarding the individual's testing or credit provisions" was the number one recommendation of the Personnel Officers.

COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF

THE NEVADA COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

Plans for a comprehensive review of the Nevada Competency Testing Program were approved by the Commission on Professional Standards in the fall of 1995. The review was carried out during 1995-96. The results are presented in this report. A copy of the original plans can be found in Appendix A.

I. Review of Tests and Passing Scores in Current Program

1. Review of test coverage for new applicants. The Department of Information Services provided a printout showing the number of times each endorsement offered by Nevada had been issued on an initial license during the period July 1, 1992 through June 30, 1995. The following table lists the first 60 of these endorsements in rank order. There are 121 endorsements in all; those not shown in this table were issued less than 20 times over the three year period. The 60 endorsements listed represent 95.3% of all endorsements issued during this period.

The purpose of examining these endorsement counts is to calculate the amount of testing coverage currently afforded by the Nevada Competency Testing Program and to determine if there are endorsement areas not being tested for which there are sufficient numbers to do so. The goal since the inception of the program has been to obtain the broadest coverage possible in the interests of program effectiveness and fairness. However, when the numbers of endorsements issued in a particular area are very small, test reliability is questionable. This is why our practice has been to first validate those tests related to the largest incidence of endorsements issued, then follow with the next largest, etc.

The single asterisks in the table refer to endorsements which do not stand by themselves, but require that an individual also have an elementary or secondary endorsement. Therefore, these we would not consider in plans for new tests. The two asterisks by the name of an endorsement represent endorsements which can stand alone and for which we currently have no tests. During 1996-97, we are asking teacher panels to examine music tests which could, if approved, apply to all the music endorsements. Our current overall coverage of competency testing, based on these 92-95 data, is calculated to be 87.3%. All this information can be used in any future decisions to make changes in the program.

STATE OF NEVADA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ENDORSEMENT COUNTS: JULY 1, 1992 THROUGH JUNE 30, 1995
--IN RANK ORDER--

	CODE	DESCRIPTION	INITIAL LICENSE
1.	EO1	TEACHING-ELEMENTARY	2,360
2.	S57	GENERALIST-RESOURCE ROOM	405
3.	H123	ENGLISH	325
4.	H30	SOCIAL STUDIES	262
5.	S02	SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	259
6.	S56	LTD GENERALIST-RESOURCE ROOM	233
7.	H96	MATH W/CALCULUS	222
8.	S39	LIMITED TESL *	222
9.	H26	PHYSICAL EDUCATION	172
10.	H04	BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE	141
11.	S17	MUSIC * *	139
12.	H87	HISTORY OF THE U.S. AND WORLD	122
13.	S18	PHYSICAL EDUCATION	113
14.	S09	ART	105
15.	H16	GENERAL SCIENCE	97
16.	S54	SPEECH & LANGUAGE HANDICAPPED	94
17.	E11	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION * *	92
18.	S06	COUNSELOR K-12	92
19.	S40	TESL *	89
20.	H05	BUSINESS	86
21.	H118	SPANISH	86
22.	H85	HEALTH EDUCATION	84
23.	H28	PHYSICAL SCIENCE	71
24.	E09	SOCIAL STUDIES	71
25.	E06	MATHEMATICS	67
26.	S22	SCHOOL NURSE * *	61
27.	E08	SCIENCE *	60
28.	S23	SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST * *	60
29.	H22	INDUSTRIAL ARTS * *	55
30.	E07	READING	53
31.	S15	LIBRARY SCIENCE *	52
32.	S08	COUNSELOR 7-12	48
33.	S01	LIMITED SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR	46

* This endorsement cannot stand alone.

* * No corresponding test currently in the Competency Testing Program.

	CODE	DESCRIPTION	INITIAL LICENSE
34.	S34	COMPUTER LITERACY *	46
35.	S41	READING SPECIALIST	44
36.	S36	COMPUTER APPLICATION *	43
37.	H79	FRENCH	42
38.	H18	HOME ECONOMICS	42
39.	S10	DRIVER EDUCATION 9-12 *	41
40.	H02	ART	35
41.	S24	SPANISH	35
42.	E04	ENGLISH	34
43.	S65	GIFTED & TALENTED *	33
44.	H125	PHYSICAL EDUCATION	31
45.	H95	MATHEMATICS	30
46.	S20	READING	30
47.	E10	PHYSICAL EDUCATION	30
48.	H104	MUSIC INSTRUMENTAL * *	30
49.	S62	EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION * *	29
50.	S38	COMPUTER PROGRAMMING *	29
51.	S07	COUNSELOR K-8	28
52.	H110	PSYCHOLOGY	27
53.	H111	POLITICAL SCIENCE * *	27
54.	H55	CHEMISTRY * *	26
55.	S61	ADAPTIVE PHYS ED-HANDICAPPED * *	26
56.	H68	DRAMATIC OR THEATRICAL ARTS * *	23
57.	H82	GERMAN * *	23
58.	S50	AURALLY HANDICAPPED * *	23
59.	H92	JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATION * *	20
60.	H80	GEOGRAPHY * *	20

* This endorsement cannot stand alone.

* * No corresponding test currently in the Competency Testing Program.

2. Review of Passing Scores. The Competency Testing Review Committee* was asked to review the passing scores of all NTE Specialty Area tests still in the program. These are tests which have been in place with the same passing scores since 1991 (or in a few cases since 1992). These are also tests which are unlikely to be replaced by Educational Testing Service(ETS) in the near future.

For each of these nine tests, the committee examined:

1) Scores earned by Nevada examinees within the past 3 years;
2) National summary statistics such as score range, number of examinees, median, average performance range, and standard error of measurement;
3) Passing scores used in other states;
4) Test specifications.

The Committee recommended raising the passing scores for four of these tests as follows:

Test	Current Passing Score	Recommended Passing Score
Educational Leadership: Administration and Supervision	570	590
School Guidance and Counseling	570	610
Health Education	570	600
Home Economics	580	610

The Committee questioned what they felt was a lack of application of principles in the Business Education test. They plan to bring this concern to ETS, but in the meantime recommended no change in the passing score. The Committee noted that the numbers of Nevada examinees for World and U.S. History, Psychology, Speech Communication and Introduction to the Teaching of Reading were very small and that Nevada scores were within the range of passing scores used in other states. Therefore the Committee recommended no changes in passing scores for these tests at this time. The Committee did suggest looking into the possibility of using a separate test for persons receiving an endorsement as a reading specialist.

* This a working advisory committee to the Commission on Professional Standards on matters of competency testing (see Appendix B).

II. Implementation of the Program

The Department requested nominees for an Ad Hoc Committee to be formed to discuss and brainstorm questions of concern related to the implementation of the program. Letters were sent to three districts, the Commission, the Universities, the Nevada State Education Association, the Clark County Teachers Association, and the Washoe County Teachers Association. The goal was to form a committee whose members would represent varied perspectives on the Nevada Competency Testing Program.

To accomplish this goal, Clark County School District, Washoe County School District, and Churchill County School District were each asked to nominate two persons to the Ad Hoc Committee:

1) an administrator or personnel employee who works directly with new or prospective teachers and explains or advises them about the competency testing requirements and
2) a practicing teacher who was hired within the last three years.

The Colleges of Education, University of Nevada, Reno, and the University of Nevada, Las Vegas were ask to nominate:

1) a faculty or other staff member who works directly with prospective teachers and explains/advises them regarding the competency testing requirements and
2) a prospective teacher.

The Nevada State Education Association, the Clark County Teachers Association, and the Washoe County Teachers Association were asked to nominate two persons:

1) a member who actively works with new teachers by explaining/advising them about the competency testing requirements and
2) a teacher who was hired within the last three years.

In addition, two Commission members and two Competency Testing Review Committee members served on the Ad Hoc Committee.

In order to save travel expenses, it was decided that, at least initially, the Committee would be split into north and south subcommittees. One Educational Testing Service and two Department representatives participated on both subcommittees. A list of the northern and southern committees is in Appendix C. It is hoped that the entire committee may be able to meet as a group in the future.

In the PLANS FOR COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE NEVADA COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL, four questions were listed under "Implementation of the Program". However, for the first meeting it was decided to confine the discussion to the two topics which are the most concrete and which are the most urgent. These are the topics of "Communication" and "Study Materials/Diagnostic Information".

The Northern Committee met on January 17, 1996, at the Department offices in Carson City. The Southern Committee met on January 18, 1996, at the Grant Sawyer State Office Building in Las Vegas.

At both meetings members were asked to describe their experiences with communications and study materials/diagnostic information related to the competency testing program. The Educational Testing Service representative, Chuck Teryek, presented examples of what ETS has tried to do up to this point to communicate information about the tests and to provide some study materials and/or diagnostic information. The University representatives, the teachers association representatives, and the district representatives shared some of the communication materials they have developed and actions they have taken to help candidates prepare for the tests. There was also a lively discussion regarding what else could be done to improve the program in these two areas. The tone of the meetings was very positive. Although some experiences that were reported were far from ideal, the emphasis was on improving the program in these areas and the responsibility of everyone involved to recommend solutions and contribute to this improvement.

The following problems and suggestions for improvement are compiled from both meetings. In many cases solutions to problems have been worked out and are in effect in some districts or some teachers associations. These successful experiences can serve as models to others across the state. Other proposed solutions are currently in process or have never been tried.

COMMUNICATIONS

Problem One. **Teachers sometimes have trouble determining exactly what tests they should take. Taking the wrong test is a real problem. Many teachers ask other teachers rather than getting advice from the Department or the District. Often they don't realize that the answer to "What tests do I need to take", depends upon the particular individual's endorsements, background, etc.**

Solutions

The Department:

1. As part of the implementation of a new automated records management system in Licensure, which is now in process, there will be an effort to redesign the license. The goal is that the new license will be easier for new personnel to interpret which includes understanding any provisions that are listed.

2. Also as part of the implementation of a new automated records management system, it is expected that better communication with both the districts and the teachers will be possible. For example, districts would like to know when a provision is removed for one of their teachers and they would like to know when first year provisions have been removed. Reminders of deadlines to remove testing provisions could be sent to both teachers and districts in time for the matter to be taken care of.

3. The Licensure Offices in Carson City and Las Vegas distribute and make available in their offices all materials which provide information about competency testing. These include the Praxis Registration Bulletin and the Tests at a Glance books published by Educational Testing Service and the Department's Informational Bulletin.

4. The Department produces a six page Informational Bulletin on the Nevada Competency Testing Program for Educational Personnel which is sent out with the application packet and again when a license is issued and is also distributed to all districts and universities. The bulletin includes a description of the program, lists of the exceptions, suggested procedures to follow, and a complete list of all the tests being used in Nevada aligned with their corresponding endorsements. The Informational Bulletin is revised when there are changes in the program which is at least once a year.

Some Committee members said they found the Bulletin too much to read. There was a suggestion that a brief check list stating what the newly licensed person should do first, second, etc. be developed. The Department is willing to experiment with such a form. However there is a belief that the Informational Bulletin should be retained as it is the only document which provides complete information about the Program.

Districts:

1. Some districts include licensing and competency testing in New Teacher Orientation Meetings. General information is given. Specific questions can be referred to the Department or a Licensing staff person may be invited to the meeting.

2. Some districts are providing training to their recruiters which includes knowledge of the Competency Testing Program. This information can then be communicated to prospective teachers, at least in a general way. (In the past, according to Committee members,

District personnel have been reluctant to talk about licensure, and in particular, competency testing. They have been afraid of giving inaccurate information and being liable.)

3. Most districts make competency testing materials accessible to new teachers. These should include both Department and Educational Testing Service materials--the Praxis Registration Bulletin, the Tests at a Glance, and the Department's Informational Bulletin.

Universities:

1. Both Universities have Advisement Centers. They distribute materials related to competency testing (Praxis Registration Bulletins, the Department's Informational Bulletin, etc.). They put up posters with test dates. They also orient new faculty and make advisement available to students. It is the student's choice whether to take advantage of this service.

2. The Colleges of Education at the Universities hold group seminars for prospective teachers. They invite Department staff to come and talk about licensing.

3. A University representative suggested that one reason the situation is confusing for new people is because often different language is used to refer to the same thing by the University, the Department, and the Districts. Clarifying the language or reaching some consensus on common terms could be a subject to pursue at a later meeting.

Educational Testing Service:

1. Educational Testing Service publishes the following materials:

--The Praxis Registration Bulletin which provides prospective nominees with information about the tests, the testing process, and registration.

--The Nevada Supplement to: The Praxis Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers, a brochure which lists the Nevada competency testing requirements in a concise form. (This information is also available on the Internet; the ETS address is "http://www.ets.org".)

--Tests at a Glance (TAAG) books which provide information about each test.

2. ETS provides a toll free number (1-800-772-9476) for test takers which is available from 4:30 a.m.- 6:00 p.m.(Pacific Standard Time). Prospective test takers may get answers to questions on test dates, registration deadlines, additional score reports, study guide information, scores and score status. They may also discuss other concerns or request that test related materials be sent to them.

Teachers Associations:

1. Some associations hold new teacher luncheons every year. They stress with new people the need to take responsibility to determine the correct test(s) and to meet testing requirements in the time allowed.

2. Some associations have Competency Testing Committees whose goal is to help new people meet their testing requirements.

New Licensed Educational Personnel:

1. The Committee felt that there is a need for new licensed personnel to take responsibility for themselves. The Districts and the Department and the Teachers Associations want to and can help up to a point. But ultimately the individual must take the initiative to get the correct information and meet the requirements for their profession. They cannot rely on others. The Committee was told that new people may not take any tests the first year as they are not sure they want to stay in Nevada. However, the cost of procrastination is stress and often greater expense. Instead, new people with testing provisions need to plan ahead, to prepare, review, and be as relaxed as possible at the time of testing. Not taking these requirements seriously can lead to an invalid license and being removed from the classroom. (Committee members who have worked with new teachers estimate that over 90% do take responsibility and complete their requirements on time. It is the remainder who cause themselves, their schools, their districts, the Department a great deal of unnecessary trouble and stress.)

Problem 2. When there are changes in the program, such as particular tests being replaced or new policies being approved, it is very difficult to get the word out to those who are most effected by these changes. Up to this point, the Department has sent notices explaining the changes to all superintendents, to the universities and to the teachers associations. In addition, a notice has been sent to the principal of every school in the state asking that the teachers in that school be informed either personally or by posting the notice on the Bulletin Board. Recently hired teachers on the AD Hoc Committee told us that teachers don't really pay attention to Bulletin Boards and that one notice is quickly covered by another. As a result we have often heard later from teachers that they were unaware of the changes in tests or policies that effected them.

Solutions

The Department:

1. The planned new automated recordkeeping system should allow the Department to locate just those individuals on the system to whom changes apply. For example, in the

case of new tests for the French endorsement, only the names of those persons with French endorsements and testing provisions could be retrieved; letters could be sent directly to those persons. This new system should also make possible better communication with districts concerning their teachers to whom changes will apply. In the future districts may be able to access data about their people directly.

2. In the meantime, until the new system is in operation, it was suggested that we also send notices to Personnel Officers in each district and ask for their assistance.

3. There was some discussion that the Commission and the Department may want to consider changing the current practice of requiring every one to take a new test rather than the old as of a certain date. The alternative would be to let everyone take the tests and abide by the policies in effect when his or her license was issued. This is not feasible at present but may merit further discussion when the new automated system is in place.

Districts:

1. It was suggested that the districts could help in communicating changes in the program by:
   a. asking principals to make copies of the notices and give to the appropriate teachers,
   b. asking the senators in each school to take some responsibility,
   c. put the notice or an abbreviated version in with paychecks,
   d. put the information on the hot line.

Universities:

1. The Dean's Offices of the Colleges of Education can distribute the information about changes in the program as quickly as possible to professors and post or announce in classes.

Educational Testing Service:

1. Since the summer of 1996, Educational Testing Service has had a home page on the internet. A prospective test taker can find "Nevada" under "State Requirements" and read about the specific tests required in Nevada with indications as to which are new requirements. This is the one place where ETS has the capability of updating the information quickly when changes occur.

Teachers Associations:

1. Notices of changes in the program are being put in the Association newspaper that goes to all members.

2. Associations with competency testing committees can plan other ways to make sure that information about changes gets to the people that need it through, for example, announcements at meetings, contacts by school representatives.

New Licensed Educational Personnel:

1. Even when a new automated recordkeeping system becomes a reality in the Department, communication with personnel who need change information will not work without current addresses in the system. Teachers need to understand the importance of notifying their school, their district and the Department of changes in address.

2. New personnel who know they have provisions on their licenses need to be alert to information which may come to them from many different sources e.g. on a hot line, on a school Bulletin Board, with their paycheck, on a teachers' association newsletter, through announcements at meetings.

3. New personnel who wait until the second year of employment to take care of competency testing requirements, should be aware that it is essential to acquire the latest test taking materials. The Praxis Registration Bulletin and the Tests at a Glance books are published every year in August. The Nevada Supplement to The Praxis Series and the Nevada page on the Internet are updated throughout the year as there are changes. The Informational Bulletin produced by the Department is revised at least once a year and more frequently as needed to reflect changes.

STUDY MATERIALS/DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION

Problem. New licensed personnel often ask about study materials for the tests they are registering to take. Those who take a test and do not meet Nevada's passing score are most interested in diagnostic information e.g. in what areas they are weak and what they can do to prepare before taking the test again. It was the perception of Committee members that the needs in these areas may be different for teachers who have recently graduated versus experienced teachers who are new to Nevada.

Solutions

Educational Testing Service:

1. Educational Testing Service has produced and will continue to produce more study materials related to the tests.

For the Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST) and for the Professional Knowledge test there are Tests at a Glance books which are free of charge and which give candidates a brief test description, an outline of the areas covered in the test, the number and type of questions and some sample questions. In addition, there are detailed study guides for

these tests which can be purchased. For the PPST or the Computer-Based Academic Skills Assessments (CBT) there is the Learning Plus software which can be purchased by and licensed to institutions. This is a self paced learning program which can build basic skills. Currently it is only available at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

For the Specialty or subject matter tests in the program, Tests at a Glance books are available. As was stated above for the PPST, these books provide a test description, an outline of the areas covered with percentages, the number and types of questions, and some sample questions. It is expected that with this information candidates can then seek up-to-date literature which covers these areas from University libraries, bookstores, contacts with University professors. It is expected that updating their knowledge would be especially important for teachers with years of experience coming from other states. ETS is currently working on a more detailed study guide which will correspond to the new tests for the Elementary endorsement.

2. Some diagnostic information is now being supplied by ETS. For most multiple choice tests, this information can be found on the back of the individual score report. The total score is broken down by each section of the test and corresponding average performance ranges are supplied. The candidate is then able to determine areas of weakness. It was explained that this service is not possible when the test questions are spread over many areas (due to recommendations of national teacher panels). A statistic such as average performance range would be unreliable if based on a very small number of questions.

The publication "Understanding Your Praxis Scores" gives some statistics for each test based on national test scores over a three year period.

ETS has been working on, and will soon make available, a diagnostic service for examinees who have taken a constructed response test. As this will involve hiring a trained reader to read the candidates responses expressly to provide diagnostic information, there will be a fee for this service.

Universities:

1. The College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno may consider purchasing Learning Plus. It could be put in the Learning Resource Center at UNR. It could be a joint effort between UNR and the Washoe County School District.

UNR has a Math Center and a Writing Center which District teachers could use. The University Library is open to all. The Learning resource Center is also open.

If candidates need to call someone who could advise them on up-to-date materials/books in their specialty area, call the Advisement Center; they have lists of professors who are responsible for the different subject areas.

2. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas Advisement Center has prepared a handout with suggestions/ideas for review for students to use before they take the tests.

There are people at the University who know what body of knowledge is appropriate for the different subject area tests and can anchor this to textbooks or study guides.

Districts:

1. Some districts purchase the detailed study guides for the PPST and Professional Knowledge tests and keep them in a central office for teachers to check out.

2. Districts could also consider purchasing Learning Plus, possibly in collaboration with other districts or one of the Universities.

Teachers Associations:

1. The Clark County Teachers Association provides a list of tutors to members; they provide this service without charge. They also have a list of paid consultants. CCTA is willing to share these lists with the District.

The Department:

1. The Department is not in a position to develop study or diagnostic information. However, there is an attempt to keep all parties informed as to what materials are available and which can be expected in the future.

New Licensed Personnel:

1. New personnel need to take the initiative in determining how they can best prepare for the tests. They need to take advantage of the study materials and other resources that are available.

2. For those experienced teachers who are new to Nevada, if they have kept up with developments in their field through professional literature, attending conferences, taking courses, serving on committees etc., it is less likely that testing in their field will be a problem. If they have not kept up, it is suggested that they seek out current books etc., possibly through one of the Universities and take the time to prepare.

SUMMARY

The discussions of both Ad Hoc Committees were very productive. In covering the topics of Communications and Study Materials/Diagnostic Information, members had an

opportunity to learn what others were doing in these areas and to offer their suggestions. Members were eager to share materials developed and practices that worked. Teachers Association representatives invited District personnel to their meetings on competency testing and licensing. University representatives suggested some ways that District teachers could use their resources and facilities to prepare for the tests. The previous communication gap between the groups represented was noted.

As voiced by one participant and agreed to by the others, "THE MAIN THING THAT HAS COME OUT OF THIS MEETING IS THAT WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER". Final recommendations were:

1. that the suggestions that have come out of these meetings be sent to every district, not just those with Committee representation and

2. that it would be helpful for each member of the Ad Hoc Committee to have the addresses, phone numbers and fax numbers of the others in order to facilitate continuing communication.

III. Review Ways to Encourage Completion of Competency Testing Requirements Before the License is Issued

The Department called a meeting of Personnel Officers from the following districts: Carson City, Churchill, Clark, Douglas, Elko and Washoe. The meeting was held on May 6, 1996 at the Department offices in Carson City. The Churchill County Representative was unable to attend; those present included five district Personnel Officers and four Department staff. A list of participants can be found in Appendix D.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the following topics:

a) the roles and functions of licensing versus the roles and functions of recruitment
b) strategies which could be implemented to encourage candidates to meet requirements before the license is issued
c) how provisional licenses could be phased out.

Also discussed were the were the recommendations for district changes which came out of a work flow study of Nevada's licensing process conducted by BDM International, Inc. (1996)

What follows is a summary of the discussion followed by the list of recommendations which the group felt would help both the districts and the department carry out the functions of hiring and licensing new educational personnel.

The Roles and Functions of Licensing Versus the Roles and Functions of Recruitment

All agreed that there is a distinction between the role of the Department and the role of the Districts. The State sets standards through licensing requirements. The Districts need to have teachers in the classrooms; their goal is to get the best teachers. The goal of both the State and the Districts is to obtain qualified licensed teachers for Nevada schools. In practice there may be tension between the goals of the two entities. For example, one Personnel Director said that sometimes the Districts view licensure as a block to obtaining their goal.

Strategies To Encourage Candidates to Meet Requirements Before the License Is Issued or How Provisional Licenses Could Be Phased Out

All Personnel Officers agreed that they could do more in terms of providing licensure information to prospective teachers. However, they don't do this because they are not comfortable with the materials given them from the Department. They question the accuracy of the information, the different interpretations of regulations and the difficulty of keeping up with constant changes. They would be willing to do more, but as of now their policy is to give candidates the phone number of the Licensure Office and to tell them that licensing is their responsibility. Department staff informed the group that the Commission has adopted a new policy that most changes will go into effect in January, rather than throughout the year.

The opinion of the Personnel Officers was that requiring licensure before hiring would cripple the ability of the districts to compete for teachers and other educational personnel, especially in high needs areas. They said, "This requirement would shrink the pool of applicants and lower quality."

A suggestion that might encourage new or prospective personnel to take care of their provisions earlier, was to find a better way to give people "clear information about what they need to do". Ideally a software program could be developed which would allow prospective or new teachers to put in information about themselves in response to various prompts (e.g., "Are you applying for an elementary, secondary, or special license?"; "What endorsements are on your license?"; "How many years of experience have you had teaching in these areas?"). The individual would then receive a printout showing the tests they needed and the options available. Department staff mentioned that the Department will, in the near future, be able to provide basic requirements information on the Internet.

There was also a suggestion that we review competency tests given in other parts of the country and determine whether they can be considered equivalent to our tests such as the Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST).

All Personnel Officers agreed that what they would really like to see instituted is a temporary non-renewable license which would expire on a common date. Currently if a teacher's license becomes invalid on a date during the school year, this means disrupting a classroom when that teacher is removed. It was noted by Department staff that many states do offer a temporary license, according to the latest NASDTEC Manual on Cerification (1996).

The Personnel Directors would also like to be able to obtain more information from the state about the current status of their teachers. In addition to the lists of personnel who pass a particular test (which they now receive regularly), they would like to know such things as 1) who has attempted the test(s) and failed and 2) who has never attempted the tests(s). The State should be able to notify both the district and the candidate when testing provisions have not been removed.

BDM Recommendations for Districts

One result of BDM's study of the Department's licensing process was a list of recommendations for process changes aimed at making licensing more efficient and more satisfactory. Many of these recommendations were for NDE changes, some were changes for the Commission on Professional Standards, and two were for School District changes. The latter were:

1) Change the final date on which the teachers are allowed to change positions to an earlier date than August 15 of the year.

2) If principals haven't selected teachers for positions before June 30 of the year, allow the districts to place teachers in the positions.

The Personnel Directors indicated that their voluntary transfer periods are much earlier than August 15. For example, Clark has two such periods, April 1-April 30 and May 20-June 30. In Douglas transfers must be requested by April 1, principals interview in May, and then they begin looking outside.

The District participants felt that the real questions being asked were, "How can the process be speeded up?" and "Is there a way to avoid the crunch which impacts Licensure so negatively?". Their answer to these questions was "No." For example, in Clark County where approximately 1000 new teachers are hired each year, they have no way of knowing exactly how many teachers are needed until the children show up. They always look at low, middle, and high enrollment estimates. They use the middle estimate to hire before school starts and then make adjustments after school opens. This procedure is necessary because they are tightly financed.

There was a discussion of how to alleviate the "crunch". One suggestion was that during these times, for example in August and September, more people be hired to help out

in the Licensure Office. Retirees from educational positions could be trained to do transcript evaluation. A second suggestion was to set up mini-state departments for a day in district offices as has been done in recent years in Clark County. Teachers who need to be licensed could take care of everything (fingerprints, TB tests, transcripts etc.) in one day. Several Northern Nevada districts could join together to set up such a day. A third suggestion was to make it possible for districts to obtain information about their people on line; this would save everyone's time.

Personnel Directors then reiterated the following:

1. We all hire as soon as possible.
2. New people are supposed to get in their applications for licensure as soon as possible.
3. The best way to encourage early testing is to institute a Temporary License which is only good until a certain date and make it clear to the candidate what must be done to obtain a regular license.

Incentives.

District people were asked if they had ever considered incentives to encourage applicants to get their licenses before being hired. Suggestions were: 1) reimbursing the cost of the license or 2) adding $100. to the first paycheck. District representatives said they had never considered such incentives. They don't know how this would work as they review many times more applications than people they actually hire.

District participants later suggested that, in connection with the proposed Temporary License, the Department could provide an incentive to remove all provisions early. The normal track would be that a new person with provisions would receive a Temporary License good for three years and if all provisions were removed before the effective date, the individual would receive a regular license good until the renewal date in five years. The suggestion was that if a person removed all provisions early, for example, in two years, he or she would receive a regular license good for six years.

The Problem of Current Addresses.

The District to which a teacher's license is sent is sometimes a problem. The current practice is to send the license to the district that corresponds to the individual's county of residence. District participants asked that the licenses be sent to the District where employed. Department staff responded that with the new recordkeeping system it will be possible to consolidate individual teacher data which is received from the districts every fall with the licensure data.

The problem of notifying teachers with particular provisions when there are changes effecting them, e.g., changes in the tests required, was also discussed. The new system should allow communication with specific individuals who are effected by a certain

change in a test or a regulation. But this will only work if the individual's current address is on the Department's file. Districts also have a problem encouraging personnel to update their addresses. It was suggested that teachers need to be clearly told that it is their responsibility to notify the State Department, as well as the District, of address changes.

Recommendations

The participants arrived at recommendations designed to improve the situation both for the Districts with recruitment and hiring responsibilities and for the Department with licensing responsibilities.

1. A 3 year Temporary License with explicit information regarding the individual's testing or credit provisions.

2. Expiration of all Temporary Licenses on the same date, preferably July 1. These licenses should have the word "Temporary" on them.

3. A New user-friendly, accurate, written licensure information packet which everyone knows will be in effect until a certain date.

4. Identification of licensing "crunch times" in order to arrange for peakload assistance.

5. Broader use of the Mini-State Department Model developed in Clark County during which several hundred teachers can be licensed in one day.

6. Computerized inquiry software by which candidates could feed in data about themselves and receive accurate information regarding their testing requirements.

7. NDE E-Mail to relieve the frustration of applicants with the current phone system in the Licensure Offices.

8. On-Site NDE Support. (A Licensure staff person accessible at District Offices by appointment on regular dates.)

9. Research test reciprocity (look into possibility of accepting other competency tests taken in other states).

Finally, Department staff expressed an interest in continuing this kind of communication with District Personnel people. It was suggested that Department staff could submit agenda items for the regular meetings that District Personnel people hold once a month, the day before the Superintendents Meetings.

References

BDM. (1996, April). Work Flow Analysis of Teacher Licensing Process, Final Report. Albuquerque, NM: Author.

National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification. (1996). The NASDTEC Manual 1996-1997. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Snow, M.B. (1995, February). The Nevada Competency Testing Program for Educational Personnel. Carson City, NV: Nevada Department of Education.

APPENDIX A

PLANS FOR COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF

THE NEVADA COMPETENCY TESTING PROGRAM FOR EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL

I. **Review of Tests and Passing Scores in Current Program**

QUESTIONS:

1. Are the number and types of tests required and the exceptions allowed sufficient to protect the children in Nevada?

2. Are the standards or passing scores sufficiently high to protect children in classrooms?

3. Should Nevada's passing scores be reviewed in the light of new national percentiles published in summer 1994 by Educational Testing Service? Are they too low? Are they equitable?

WHO SHOULD ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS?

The Department of Education, the Department of Information Services, and the Competency Testing Review Committee.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

1. The Department of Education and the Department of Information Services will work together to obtain the latest data regarding the numbers of people who applied for and received initial licenses with endorsements in each area offered in Nevada.

   Department staff will compare these data with the number and types of tests currently in the Competency Testing Program to determine the amount of coverage afforded by the Program. We will also determine in which subject areas there are sufficient numbers to demand tests in additional areas. All this information will be used in future decisions/changes in the Program.

2. The Competency Testing Review Committee will review the passing scores currently used in the program. To accomplish this task they will be provided with Nevada test score data, the most recently published national percentiles, the most recent national data, standard errors of measurements and the passing scores used in other states for each of the tests currently in use in the

Program. In addition they will look at the passing scores originally recommended by the panels of teachers who reviewed them.
The Committee will concentrate most of their attention on the NTE Specialty Area tests as the new Praxis II tests have not been used in the state long enough to be able to obtain representative test score data.

We expect the Committee will produce a set of recommendations regarding changes in passing scores. The Committee will also be asked to develop a timetable for future review of the Program's tests, both the NTE and the Praxis II tests.

II. Review the Implementation of the Program

QUESTIONS:

1. Is the implementation of the program satisfactory? Could it be improved? In what ways?

2. Is information about the program communicated in an effective manner? Which parties should receive this information? Which parties should take responsibility for communication about the program?

3. Should diagnostic information and remedial opportunities be available to examinees? If so, who should be responsible for these components? What could be done?

4. What steps can be taken to ensure consistent enforcement of the program in the future? Which parties can contribute to the ability to adhere to the policy as set in regulation?

WHO SHOULD ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS?

Ad hoc committees made up of representatives of: the Commission, the Committee, the Department, Educational Testing Service, District personnel, the Universities, teacher associations, and recent examinees. Different committees could address different questions or one committee could discuss all the issues, meeting as many times as needed.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

1. The Department will request nominations to the ad hoc committee(s) and will be responsible for the creation of the ad hoc committee(s) and the organization of their meetings.

2. The ad hoc committee(s) will meet to brain storm the questions of concern. The purpose of the committee's work and the expected outcomes will be communicated at the beginning.

   A list of specific questions will be prepared to start the discussion. For example,

   Communication:

   a) What are the current communication channels?
   b) Who needs to know about competency testing? How much do different parties need to know?
   c) What are the problems?
   d) What can be done to solve these problems?

   Study Materials and Diagnostic Information:

   a) What kinds of study materials are available now?
   b) What kinds of diagnostic information is available now?
   c) What else is needed? (study materials and diagnostic information)
   d) Who should be responsible for study materials and diagnostic information?
   e) What needs to be done?
   f) How is this topic related to the communication topic?

   Consistent Enforcement of the Program:

   a) Which parties are involved in enforcement currently?
   b) Which parties should be involved in enforcement?
   c) What steps could be taken to make the process go smoothly for all concerned parties?

III. **Review Ways to Encourage Completion of Competency Testing Requirements Before the License is Issued**

QUESTIONS:

1. What recruitment activities could be modified in order to make this happen?

2. How do the roles of licensure versus recruitment affect this goal?

3. What steps could be taken to encourage applicants to complete competency testing requirements early?

WHO SHOULD ADDRESS THESE QUESTIONS?

The Department of Education, the Districts, NSEA, the Universities, Educational Testing Service, and teachers hired within the last two years.

WHAT WILL BE DONE?

1. Call a meeting of Personnel Officers from Clark, Washoe, and Elko with Department personnel to discuss:

   a) the roles and functions of licensing versus the role and functions of recruitment
   b) strategies which could be implemented to encourage meeting requirements before license is issued
   c) how provisional licenses could be phased out

2. Hold a second meeting with broader representation: district personnel officers, the Department, NSEA, Educational Testing Service, University, new teacher (with and without provisions) representatives to review recommendations from the first meeting.

IV. Final Recommendations

All recommendations from the studies of the three areas 1) Review of Tests and Passing Scores in the Current Program, 2) Review of the Implementation of the Program, and 3) Review of Ways to Encourage Completion of Competency Testing Requirements before Licensure, will be compiled and presented to the Commission on Professional Standards in Education.

APPENDIX B

MEMBERS

Competency Testing Review Committee

Shirley Perkins	Commission on Professional Standards in Education
Brendolyn Black	Commission on Professional Standards in Education
Richard DeMar	Nevada Association of School Boards
James Parry	Nevada Association of School Administrators
Marcia R. Bandera	Nevada Association of School Superintendents
Debbie Cahill	Nevada State Education Association
Dr. Bea Babbitt	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Dr. Gary L. Peltier	University of Nevada, Reno
Frank South	Nevada Department of Education
Doug Stoker	Nevada Department of Education
Dr. Mary Snow	Nevada Department of Education

APPENDIX C

NORTHERN AD HOC COMMITTEE

Lori Pellegrino	Churchill County School District
Lori Norcutt	Churchill County School District
Shirley Perkins	Commission on Professional Standards
Mary Snow	Department of Education
Doug Stoker*	Department of Education
Chuck Teryek	Educational Testing Service
Debbie Cahill	Nevada State Education Association
Dr. Vernon Luft	University of Nevada, Reno
Will Sappenfield	University of Nevada, Reno
Donna Brothers	Washoe County School District
Joan Smaby	Washoe County School District
Francine Stancill	Washoe County Teacher's Association
Allyson Kendrick	Washoe County Teacher's Association

*Linda Buchanan attended in Doug Stoker's place

SOUTHERN AD HOC COMMITTEE

Lina Gutierrez	Clark County School District
Mary Ann Gibbs	Clark County School District
Dan Temple	Clark County Classroom Teacher's Association
Denise Wilson	Clark County Classroom Teacher's Association
Georgia Smith	Clark County Classroom Teacher's Association
Brendolyn Black	Commission on Professional Standards
Mary Snow	Department of Education
Doug Stoker*	Department of Education
Chuck Teryek	Educational Testing Service
Dr. Bea Babbitt	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
John George	University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Dr. Marie Landwer	University of Nevada, Las Vegas

*Felicia Pagan attended in Doug Stoker's place.

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANTS

Meeting of District Personnel Officers and Department Staff

May 6, 1996
Carson City, Nevada

Carson City School District	Dr. Patty Hawkins
Churchill County School District	Gary Imelli*
Clark County School District	Dr. George Ann Rice
Douglas County School District	George Mross
Elko County School District	Harold Ridgway
Washoe County School District	Denise Gallues
Nevada Department of Education	Dr. Keith Rheault
Nevada Department of Education	Dr. Kevin Crowe
Nevada Department of Education	Frank South
Nevada Department of Education	Dr. Mary Snow

*Gary Imelli was unable to attend